YALETOWN

A WALKING TOUR THROUGH HISTORY

THE CITY OF VANCOUVER PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE B.C. HERITAGE TRUST
THE HERITAGE VANCOUVER SOCIETY
THE VANCOUVER MUSEUM

100-04093/

WALKING THE TOUR

The entire tour will take about two hours beginning on Pacific Boulevard, between Drake and Davie Streets. If possible, walk the tour during business hours so that you see the interiors of commercial buildings and appreciate the interesting mixture of Yaletown users. For information on public transportation to Yaletown, telephone TRANSLINK at 521-0400.

The B.C. Heritage Trust has provided financial assistance to this project to support conservation of our heritage resources, gain further knowledge and increase public understanding of the complete history of British Columbia.

For more information about YALETOWN:

Exploring Vancouver: The Essential Architectural Guide
by Harold Kalman, Ron Phillips and Robin Ward (UBC Press, Vancouver, 1993).

Vancouver: An Illustrated History
by Patricia E. Roy (James Lorimer and Company, Toronto, 1980).

The Greater Vancouver Book
edited by Chuck Davis (Linkman Press, Vancouver, 1997).

Vancouver The Way It Was
by Michael Kluckner (Whitecap Books, 1984).

Visit the City of Vancouver's Heritage Website at *www.city.vancouver.bc.ca*

INTRODUCING YALETOWN

Until recently Yaletown, the warehouse district in Vancouver's Downtown South area, was relatively unknown to most Vancouverites. Now with its mixture of art galleries, retail stores, restaurants, offices and new residential developments, Yaletown has become a vital part of the city. In Yaletown you can still see turn-of-the-century warehouses, early rooming houses and single-family homes. This tour will introduce you to the area's history and point out buildings of special historical and architectural interest.

Like many parts of Vancouver, Yaletown's early days were shaped by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). In 1886, Vancouver became the western terminus for the CPR and the City offered the CPR a 20-year exemption from local taxes if it built its rail yards and repair facilities on False Creek's north shore. The CPR agreed, moving its machinery and employees from its former shops at Yale in the Fraser River canyon to the new site. The CPR workers felled trees and graded streets. They built a roundhouse and other facilities for maintaining and repairing steam locomotives. For their own shelter, some workers literally moved house, loading their houses in Yale onto flatcars and sending them by rail to the new "Yaletown". Most, however, lived in rooming houses, like the Yaletown Hotel which offered cheap lodgings and board to the many bachelor railroad workers.

Over the next 20 years other heavy industries located on the north shore of False Creek. By 1907, a shingle mill, cooperage and cement works were in operation along False Creek. Sawmill workers floated booms in False Creek and loaded lumber destined for the Canadian prairies onto nearby rail cars. Labourers in these industries usually lived nearby, thus saving streetcar fares by walking to their workplaces. On this walking tour, look for the handful of remaining wooden frame houses from this era. Imagine street after street closely packed with similar modest homes and a neighbourhood of people who walked to work or school together, socialized at church suppers and argued at union picnics.

Imagine also the thick clouds of black smoke that contemporaries recall hanging over the area day after day.

At the turn of the century, business was booming throughout the province with mining in the Kootenays, farming in the Okanagan, and fishing off the coast. As people in small towns found they had cash in their pockets, they searched the local stores for ways to spend it. Vancouver cashed in, becoming the wholesaling centre for western Canada. Goods were shipped from the east on the CPR and warehoused in Vancouver. Armies of travelling salesmen fanned out over the province, supplying small-town shopkeepers. By 1910, over 1000 commercial travellers called Vancouver home.

In 1900, the City laid out streets and planned a new eight-block warehouse district near the original Yaletown. Situated beside the old CPR Yaletown, this new Yaletown (the one most commonly recognized today) was bounded by Nelson, Homer, Drake and Pacific Streets. All but four of the buildings noted in this tour were built between 1909 and 1913. The original tenants were warehousing companies, truck and transfer firms, and small manufacturers. With a location near both the CPR's rail lines and its shipping dock, Yaletown was a convenient and cheap point for processing, repackaging and warehousing goods before they were shipped once again.

Macdonald's Consolidated Warehouse at the corner of Helmcken and Mainland Streets. Photo c. 1920

In the late 1920s, Vancouver created its very first city plan. City officials felt certain that to prosper Vancouver would need more industry and that new industry would want to locate near False Creek and the downtown. The area between the bridges at Cambie and Granville Streets, which included Yaletown, seemed a logical place. In 1929, the City passed a series of zoning by-laws based on this vision, and Yaletown was zoned for commercial and light industrial uses. City officials expected the construction of more six-storey warehouses like those built between 1909 and 1913.

The Canadian Bag Company warehouse at 1152 Mainland Street. Photo c. 1929

Vancouver attracted industry, but with the advent of truck trailer transportation, most of that industry was located near freeways on low-rent suburban land. Although downtown Vancouver prospered, it was as a city of white-collar office workers. Some light industries such as printers and food processors did build in Yaletown, but the zoning had the most dramatic impact on the working-class neighbourhood. As factories and shops threatened residential streets, home-owners sold out. By the 1950s, this exodus had caused Central School at Dunsmuir and Cambie to close.

Vancouver began its transformation into a city of high-rises during the 1960s, however, Yaletown and the adjacent area remained immune to the trend. Yaletown was targeted as a source of cheap parking space for commuting office workers. Deteriorating houses were razed to create the many small-surface parking lots that still dot the area.

Other North American cities have renovated and recycled their warehouse districts, and that process is now well advanced in Yaletown. In the late 1970s and 1980s, Yaletown became the focus for a series of changes in the downtown area. Young urban professionals found Yaletown's old warehouses convenient to downtown, relatively inexpensive and architecturally attractive.

Former industrial buildings, warehouses and working-class houses now serve as professional offices for architects, lawyers and accountants, upscale eateries, trendy nightspots and loft-style residences.

The City recognized Yaletown's architectural and historical importance by zoning it as a historic district which allows for new uses while maintaining the special character of the area (see map which denotes the area). The rail-yards that served the Yaletown warehouse were located immediately to the south, along False Creek's north shore. After the CPR pulled up its Yaletown rail-yards, the land was used briefly as the site for Expo 86. Today the same lands are being developed with a mix of high-density commercial, residential and cultural uses as part of the development of Pacific Place. The former CPR Roundhouse has been transformed into a community center for the neighborhood. The area immediately to the west of Yaletown, known as Downtown South, was home to light industrial and entertainment uses until recently. Downtown South is now being developed as a high-density residential neighbourhood combined with retail, office and entertainment uses.

1 ROUNDHOUSE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Pacific Boulevard at Davie Street

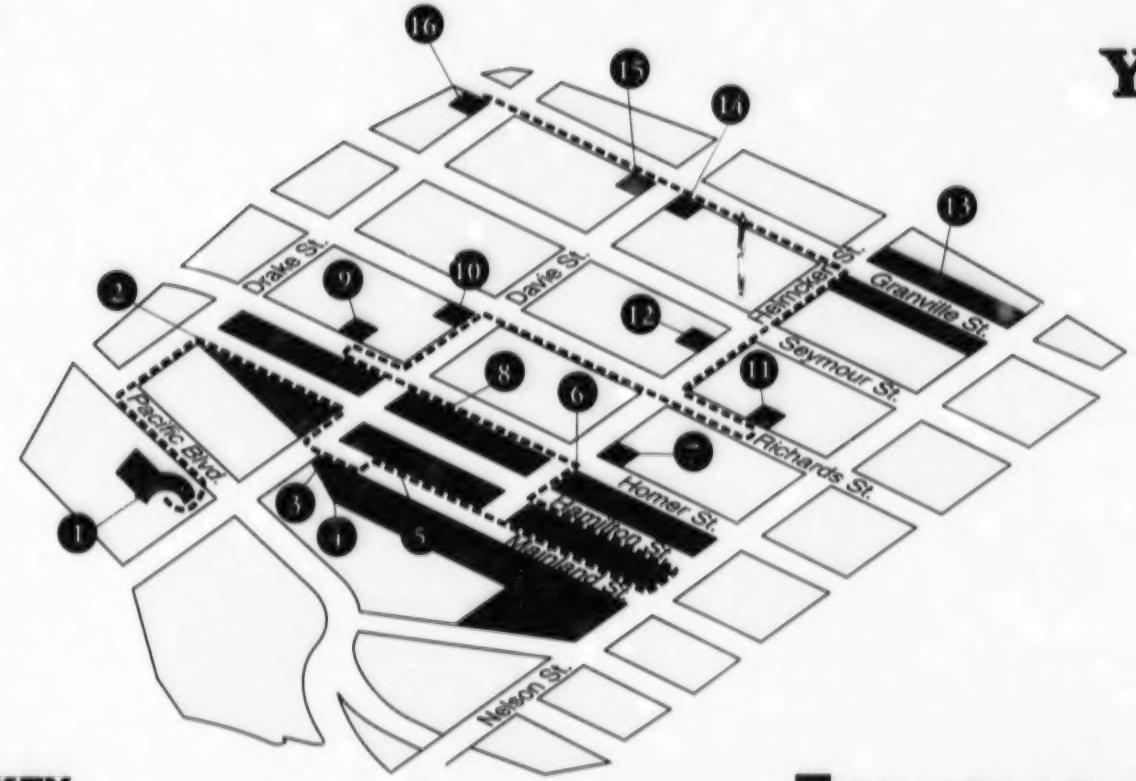
The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) built the red brick roundhouse at the northern edge of its repair yards in 1888 to service steam locomotives. The building has had many additions over the years. During its restoration for Expo 86, the original 1888 portion along with the 1950s diesel shop were retained. Engine 374, the first train to cross Canada to Vancouver in 1887, is also located within the Roundhouse complex. The Roundhouse has been converted and expanded into a community centre by Baker McGarva Hart Architects to serve the residents of Pacific Place and Downtown South.

2 YALETOWN DOCKS

Hamilton and Mainland Streets

Warehouses in Yaletown were built on the edge of False Creek to take advantage of proximity to the old industrial heart of the city and of a sloping site. The uphill (west) side of the warehouse gained access to office space and this facade tended to be embellished with architectural details. The downhill, "working" side of the warehouse featured loading docks and canopies. Most of Yaletown's warehouses were built between 1909-1913 and are four to six storeys high, with internal freight elevators used for shifting goods. Although today Hamilton and Mainland Streets are one-way for vehicular traffic, they were originally laid out for rail spurs; these were pulled up in the 1980s. Docks were deep enough for easy unloading of the boxcars, and permanent canopies, cantilevered off the rear of the buildings, sheltered goods and workers from Vancouver rains. Today the docks serve as large elevated sidewalks for a variety of commercial uses.

YALETOWN



KEY

- **Roundhouse Community Centre** - *Pacific Boulevard at Davie St.*
- **Yaletown Docks** - *Along Hamilton St.*
- **Bill Curtis Plaza** - *Corner of Mainland and Davie St.*
- **Yaletown Building** - *1152 Mainland St.*
- **Percival Building** - *1155 Mainland St.*
- **Former Westinghouse Warehouse** *1090 Homer Street*
- **Sebring Auto "The Automotive"**- *1085 Homer St.*
- **Former Front, Darling & company Building** - *1144 Homer St.*

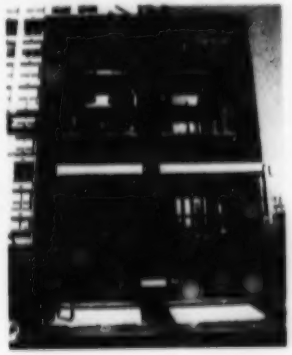
Yaletown Historic Warehouse District (HA-3)

- **Yaletown Towers** - *1241 Homer St.*
- **Canadian Linen Supply Building** - *1232 Richards St.*
- **1021 Richards Street**
- **Brookland Court** - *540 Helmcken St.*
- **Hotel Row**-*1000 Block of Granville Street*
- **Bank of Nova Scotia/The Dance Centre** - *1196 Granville St.*
- **Former Golden Gate Hotel** - *676 Davie Street*
- **Yale Hotel** - *1300 Granville St.*

3 BILL CURTIS PLAZA

Corner of Mainland and Davie Streets

Bill Curtis Plaza was created in 1993 to provide green space for local residents and to house an elevator to underground parking. A two-storey structure marks the entry into this triangular shaped plaza. The structure's design, with its open timber frame, use of brick and arched window openings, pays homage to the construction methods of Yaletown's early warehouse buildings. The low curving wall denotes the original False Creek shoreline.



4 YALETOWN BUILDING

1152 Mainland Street

The Yaletown Building was constructed in 1913 as a warehouse and office space, and tenants included the National Bag Company and the Canadian Naval Store. Renovated and renamed, it now houses several architectural firms. The building appeals to professionals because of its proximity to downtown at a relatively low cost, and its sturdy, straightforward good looks. The large numbers on the building recall the presence of rail-cars on the street, when engineers needed to view addresses easily.

5 PERCIVAL BUILDING

1155 Mainland Street

This warehouse building was completed in 1912 and is typical of the development that occurred in Yaletown prior to World War One. Its utilitarian design allowed for storage, manufacturing, office and commercial uses to be accommodated within the same facility. A fire in the early 1950s resulted in the window openings being filled in with poured concrete. The building was rehabilitated in 1994 to accommodate a mix of residential and commercial uses.

6 FORMER WESTINGHOUSE WAREHOUSE

1090 Homer Street

Built circa 1910 for the Canadian Westinghouse Company Ltd. as a warehouse facility, this building was rehabilitated in 1992 by Novam Development to accommodate office and retail tenants. The rehabilitation involved the removal of ground floor additions and installation of new storefronts that recall the original configuration and detailing. New, smaller scaled canopies reminiscent of Yaletown's large industrial canopies were also installed

7 SEBRING AUTO / "THE AUTOMOTIVE"

1085 Homer Street

The long, low lines of this building reflect the modern style. Efforts to design aerodynamic automobiles influenced its smooth, streamlined profile. This building and its neighbour were designed for the kind of light industry that city planners developed to attract to the Yaletown area with the 1929 zoning changes.

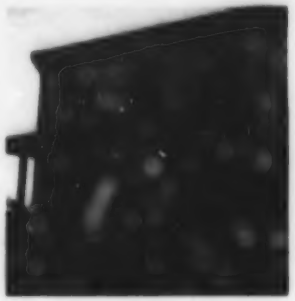
8 FORMER FRONT DARLING &CO. BUILDING

1144 Homer Street

This was built in 1913 for Front Darling & Co. Electrical Supplies and Machinery. Since March 1992 it has been the home of Soho Café and Billiards. A peek inside the café will show what can be done with careful attention to detail in the collection and installation of fixtures and furniture.

9 YALETOWN TOWERS

1241 Homer Street



Rooming houses such as this one offered inexpensive, convenient lodgings for the many single working men who crowded into Vancouver in the early 1900s. Completed in 1910, the building is reputedly designed by architect J. Pearson for David McCall, a CPR boilermaker. The double-entry stair and the wooden cornice and brackets are original, but the curlicue ornaments over the windows were added when the building was renovated for office use.

10 CANADIAN LINEN SUPPLY

1232 Richards Street

Completed in 1928, the former Canadian Linen Supply Building was designed by the notable Vancouver firm, Townley and Matheson. Its concrete construction and streamlined design are indicative of industrial Art Deco architecture. The protection and adaptive reuse of the building as a public market was achieved through the City's unique Heritage Density Bonus system. In exchange for ensuring the building's protection, the property owner was allowed extra density, a portion of which could be sold off-site at a later time.

11 1021 Richards

Built in 1907 for salesman Robert F. Emory, this building was at one time a violin studio. Percy Linden has owned the house since 1970, and in the spring and summer months his colorful birdhouses are visible. Although increasingly rare, examples of single family homes still remain from the original Yaletown neighbourhood. The house located at 1386 Hornby Street was completed in 1888, and is reputed by some to be the oldest surviving house in Vancouver. It was built for George Leslie, a plasterer by trade, and is one of the very few houses that remain from the original Yaletown neighbourhood. It was adaptively re-used as an upscale restaurant.

12 BROOKLAND COURT

540 Helmcken Street

This handsome block was built for W.A. and J.R. Lightheart in 1910 and was known as the Lightheart Apartments. It began as a six-storey structure however in 1923 a seventh floor was added. The original U-shape plan created a recessed central bay which featured open balconeys above the main entry. The building was converted to non-market housing in 1990, and the balconeys were transformed into bay windows that harmonize with the remaining exterior walls. A notable feature of Brookland Court in the central entrance which features a large, round-arch transom window, Tuscan columns, and a dentilated cornice.

13 HOTEL ROW

The 1000 Block Granville Street

Between 1910 and 1913, many modest hotels opened along this stretch of Granville Street. With tiled entryways, brass handrails and polished marble stairs, the hotels were home for many of the travelling salesmen working the region. Five of the hotels in this block–the Barron, the Glenaird, the Regal, the Royal and the Vogue–were designed and built by architects Parr and Fee. Parr and Fee designed a total of twelve apartment hotels along the 800 to 1200 blocks of Granville between 1908 and 1911. They also designed the Vancouver Block at 736 Granville, a prominent landmark with its large neon clock.

14 THE BANK OF NOVA SCOTIA / THE DANCE CENTRE

1196 Granville Street

Designed by architects Sharp and Thompson and completed in 1929, the Bank of Nova Scotia building displayed a mix of the Art Deco and Classical Revival styles. In 1999, the City approved partial retention of this building as part of its transformation into the Dance Centre. The 1000 and 1100 blocks of Granville Street feature several wooden frame commercial buildings, many with living quarters on the second floor. Most of these date from the early 1900s, and are little-noticed survivors of old Vancouver on the edge of the modern commercial district.

15 FORMER GOLDEN GATE HOTEL

676 Davie Street

This building was completed in 1890 as the Golden Gate Hotel and has been continuously occupied since then. The ground floor was the original location of The Bank of Nova Scotia, which opened here in 1912 and moved to its own building in 1929. Since 1940, there has been a restaurant on the corner.

16 YALE HOTEL

1300 Granville Street

Built in 1890, this is one of Vancouver's oldest surviving hotels. The Colonial Hotel, as it was originally called, was a rooming house for workers at the CPR yards. Its mansard roof, arched windows and decorative brickwork are distinctive features. Drake Street between Granville Street and Pacific Boulevard was the main artery of the original Yaletown settlement of CPR workers. For years 'The Yale' has been known as *the* spot for Blues music in Vancouver.